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FULL COLOR
POSTER
INSIDE

ALIEN

**THE OFFICIAL POSTER MAGAZINE
OF THE YEAR'S MOST TERRIFYING MOVIE**



THE ALIEN PRODUCTION FILE

THE MYSTERY OF THE DERELICT

THE ALIEN PRODUCTION FILE

"A FANATICAL ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND LIGHTING... A SKILLFUL MARRIAGE OF SPECIAL EFFECTS AND A SOMBRE SENSE OF FOREBODING"

"Alien is a very hard film" says Director Ridley Scott and there's no doubt that audiences everywhere are in agreement. Alien is so hard that it packs a piledriver punch. It comes at the viewer in a way that whispers *watch out!* and softly moans *beware* — because something terrible this way comes!

There is this sense of the dreadful that haunts Alien from the opening shots of the Nostromo and her huge ore refineries. Impending doom, like the Conradian nemesis you might expect, lingers over the Nostromo as she glides silent and dark through the unbounded night. The skin crawls, the eyes search desperately for escape but there is no turning back.

Alien caused some controversy when it was released this summer, largely because the film pulls no punches and delivers shock and fright in double-attack doses. Something that worried 20th Century Fox execs enough to make them try the film out on audiences in test showings to monitor the effects. If people had really been unable to take it they planned to cut down on the horror and fear in Alien. Fortunately audiences loved it, came out wringing their hands and saying "it scared me to death but it was great!" and Fox felt no need to water down one of the best suspense thrillers in many years.

Alien also brought something back into SF films that had been largely ignored in the rebirth of the genre in the mid-70's, that something which steals upon us in the dark, predatory and cruel and implacably fierce. In a sense Alien returned us to SF's Outermost Limits. Skittering there on the edge of the known, out beyond the star systems colonized by humanity. Lost in the dark where dead worlds orbit in dying solar systems that conceal ancient, lurking mystery. Where protean terror can spring out of a mummified

egg after a wait of aeons. This is territory that has always been classic ground for Science Fiction, a gothic form of SF that has a distinguished pedigree reaching back to the Golden Ages of SF in the '30s and early Alien also disturbed many SF purists because it is clearly so far removed from current SF orthodoxy. In a sense this is because everyone involved in the production of Alien recognized that they were making a thriller, a horror film and not a 2001 style, futurology showcase.

Mind you the special effects work, both the scenes involving the Nostromo and the later scenes with the Alien terror itself, is highly effective. Employing rotoscoping and an overlay technique on the negative itself allowed the special effects team lead by Nick Alder to do without travelling matte and to marry the exterior space shots with the interior scenes with their low keyed lighting. The shots of the Nostromo have the lowest contrast quality yet seen in outer space special effects filming. They fit superbly with the rest of the film in which Director Ridley Scott used his fanatical attention to detail and lighting to very good effect.

Scott wanted the opening sequences, with their slow pacing and vast spaces to implant a melancholic, doom-laden tone to the movie. He also wanted to focus attention to the loneliness of space travel and the mental problems that it would engender in human crews. From the opening moments when we see the Nostromo moving through the immensity of



The hunter... and the hunted! Top: The alien in full fury. Bottom: Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), the Nostromo's warrant officer.

space there is a skillful marriage of special effects work and a sombre sense of foreboding. The Nostromo is a dark, massive outline picked out against the stars. The music is subdued by SF movie standards and there is something sad, almost mournful, about it right from the opening sequences.

As the camera view narrows and closes in on the space tug we ride a shot that takes us from outside, in space, to the inside, amongst technology, where the computer "Mother" is waking the crew having received the first whispers of the alien beacon. Our first view of the crew, dreaming in the petal-like sleepers that enclose them, is at once a powerful evocation of humanity, so



fragile and soft and truly organic, borne like a seed in the vast mechanism of the Nostromo, and at the same time a subtle statement of peril. They are helpless, asleep until woken by the computer.

Later of course, as their predicament becomes

more clear to us, we realise the strength and depth of Ridley Scott's work and the neat way that it fits in with the Walter Hill script with all its relentless, taut pace. These people are not only very human and very vulnerable they are victims. Victims of the human greed of the

company they work for.

This theme of human fragility and duplicity is something that was inherent in Alien from its beginnings in Dan O'Bannon's imagination. When his original story was taken up by Walter Hill and David Giler and later bought by Fox a few changes were made but these mostly involved putting in the female characters and developing the role of Ash, the treacherous Science Officer. O'Bannon's slightly tongue in cheek, lived in style of space travel remained. O'Bannon is clearly convinced that people will still be people in the far future, even if they work in the space lanes. Thus the Nostromo has a lived in appearance. It's much more like a locker room/communal

apartment than say a Jumbo Jetliner or the futuristic space craft of 2001. Besides there's even Jones, the natural survivor, orange ship's cat! Jones must be the first cat to travel in hypersleep in a major motion picture!

But to translate the script and story into film called for exacting standards in filmmaking. There were enormous sets, they spent two million dollars on them, in particular the huge sets for the Alien Derelict space craft which rose like eery phantasms from another world in the middle of England's Shepperton studios. There were three different illustrators, each handling the look of a different aspect of the production, outer space, inside the Nostromo, and the Derelict and the alien planetoid. Each place had its own style which had to be carefully co-ordinated with the others. Inevitably there were problems and arguments but somehow the film met its 10 week schedule.

Ridley Scott had only made one full length feature film before shooting Alien, his career has been mainly in television commercials. He is one of the few television commercial directors who has a highly recognizable style, usually involving lighting and the use of incense smoke as a filter to mute colours and suggest nostalgic atmosphere. However his first film, 'The Duellists', adapted from a Joseph Conrad story set in the Napoleonic wars, won him a special jury prize at Cannes and also brought him to the attention of Sandy Lieberson, Fox's head of European Production. When Fox was looking for someone to make Alien with Walter Hill's script it only took one viewing of 'The Duellists' to bring them to choose Scott.

Scott is a director who handles his own cameras, who takes great pains with the lighting, believing that it has

enormous importance in getting the right look for his films, and who pays ferocious attention to detail. He has worked as a set designer and a photographer and spent seven years at West Hartlepool College of Art and London's Royal College of Art before going into television design and directing. His background in design led him to the choice of H. R. Giger for the designs of the Alien and the Derelict ship and it also ensures his constant concern for detail. He likes to build his scenes meticulously, keeping a slow enough pace to allow the audience to notice all the features in a shot. One facet of Alien that has already received a lot of praise and comment is the wealth of detail that Scott managed to fit into the screen.

Perhaps his most singular trademark however is the way he lights his shots. Heavy backlighting is evident, there is a subtle extra-three dimensionality that pervades the interior shots of the Nostromo. Rim lighting is another favorite and with it goes the use of incense smoke, never enough so that it can actually be seen since that would defeat the purpose, but just enough to filter the light and mute colors while increasing depth.

At 39 years of age Scott has been called movie making's most experienced newcomer. Certainly it's an oddity that he should have only begun to make feature films this late in his career but his work on literally hundreds of commercials schooled him in the need for maximum impact with minimum screen time that is so essential for TV commercials. After the success of Alien, where nobody can deny the sheer power, impact if you like, of Scott's direction, movie goers can be sure they'll be seeing more work from this talented late starter.

ALIEN

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JOHN HURT IAN HOLM YAPHET KOTTO

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STORY BY DAN O'BANNON AND RONALD SHUSETT SCREENPLAY BY DAN O'BANNON MUSIC JERRY GOLDSMITH
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R

TOURAM DOLBY DIGITAL

SELECTED THEATRES

SEE THE WEATHER BOSS

ALIEN

THE MYSTERY OF THE DERELICT

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN HUMANITY AND SOMETHING UTTERLY ALIEN, SOMETHING THAT HAS LAIN SILENT IN THE DARK FOR UNTOLD AGES.

It is one of the great questions that confronts humanity. It is one of the most enduring fascinations of Science Fiction. It contains what may be our greatest hopes and what might also confirm our worst fears. It deals with Alien life. What will our first contacts with such lifeforms be like? Will they usher in a new age of wisdom and peaceful contact? Or might they bring down upon us all some horrifying threat?

'IN A SENSE ALIEN RETURNED US TO S.F.'S OUTERMOST LIMITS'

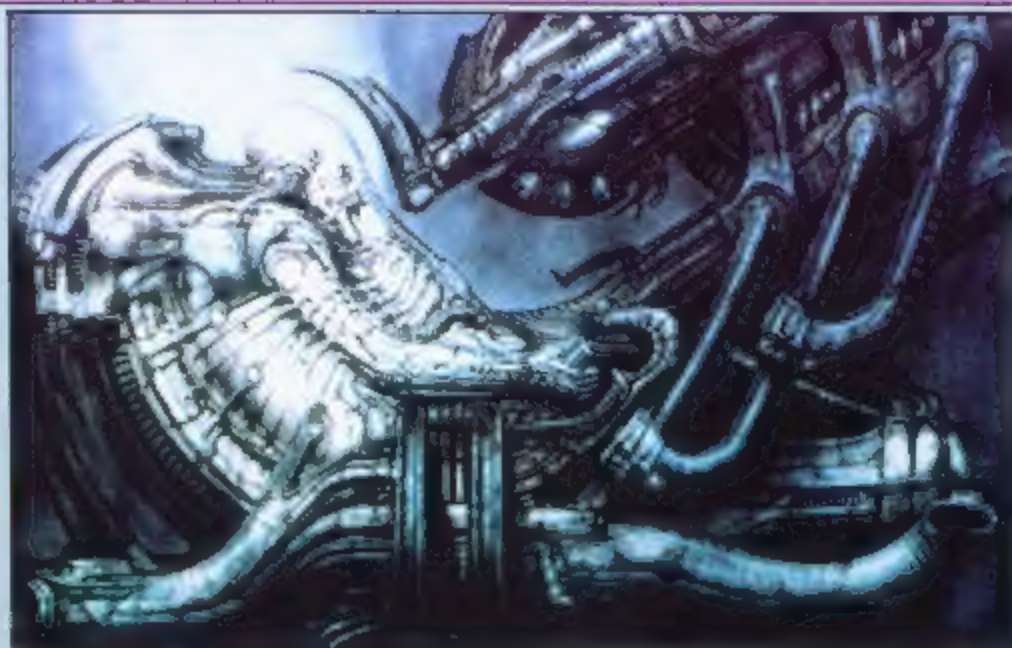
Here we confront an absolute unknown, a zone where only our imagination can take us. However one thing does remain predictable and that is the power of human curiosity. Human inquisitiveness is a tremendous force in human affairs and we can be sure that when the moment comes that we discover something out there in the stars that is genuinely of non-human origin, whether it be the most merest scrap of radio signal or a drifting hulk, it will be next to impossible for humans to pass it by.

In this sense *Alien*, 20th Century Fox's smash hit, SF classic, is truly a word of warning.

Alien is structured around a hinge point, a scene that acts like a fulcrum for the rest of the film. Up to that scene we are able only to anticipate the future, after it we can only dread the denouement. That fulcrum point lies on a small barren planetoid scoured by whistling winds and illuminated half-heartedly by a small sombre star. On the planet's surface is the source of the "distress" signal, repeating itself every twelve seconds. To that source the *Nostromo* and its crew must go, unaware that they have already been betrayed by the company they work for and also unaware that the signal is far from an S.O.S. — it is instead a baleful warning beacon. A radio message left cycling for

eternity by the last survivor aboard a doomed vessel left beached in the drifting dust of this small, unremarkable planetoid. A beacon that should have served to warn away all enquiring intelligences that passed nearby. A beacon that said *stay away deadly danger lies here!*

It is in this pivotal scene that *Alien* achieves a stunning breakthrough in SF film history. There are several reasons. Firstly the plot involves us in an interesting mystery. This is an encounter between humanity and something utterly alien and unknown, something that has lain silent in the dark for untold ages. Perhaps for as long as the human race has existed, it is impossible to tell. A fateful slice of the unknown, waiting patiently for humanity to take to the space lanes and ultimately stumble upon it. Secondly the design of the sets for the derelict ship and the mysteries within it were the work of Surrealist painter H. R. Giger. Giger's work is instantly identifiable and often terrifying to behold. He has been compared to a space age Hieronymus Bosch, dredging visual items of peculiar power and horror out of dreams that even he admits are frightening. The design of the derelict and the alien peril inside it are things borne on a tide of nightmare. Thirdly the artistic directors, the costume designer and film director



The Giger conception of the space jockey.



Construction in progress on the set.



The final brooding image which confronts the "Nostromo" crew members in the derelict ship.

GIGER'S REMARKABLE TECHNIQUE HIS FAMOUS 'BIOMECHANICS', PRODUCED A SET DESIGN THAT GIVES THE SCENE ITS INCREDIBLE HAUNTING EERINESS.

Ridley Scott made sure that the scenes in and around the Derelict remain firmly imprinted on our minds. They are impossible to shake so superbly are they handled. The images return again and again long after we've left the cinema with the story resolved for us.

Giger's remarkable technique, combining mechanical things with organics to produce his famous 'Biomechanics', produced a set design that gives the scene its incredible haunting eeriness. This is a space-gothic scene that erupts in the middle of a film that has previously been

almost totally human-futuristic. From the first moment we clap eyes on it the alien vessel arouses feelings of unease. It is enormous and its peculiar shape, like the huge U with one horn bent inwards further than the other, is disturbing. The three ominous looking entry ports



LOST IN THE DARK WHERE DEAD WORLDS ORBIT IN DYING SOLAR SYSTEMS THAT CONCEAL ANCIENT, LURKING MYSTERY.

that lie open at the deep end of the U are anything but inviting with their dark recessed entrances and the strange ribbing and almost organic shapes that surround them. The ship looks like the complete antithesis of anything human. For all we can see it might have been *grown* rather than built. There are no obvious drive systems. There are no signs of life.

The interior sets gave Giger the opportunity to really display his Biomechanics. Walls of bluish bone-like structures that are seemingly woven together, line the entryways. This is Giger's own art-nouveau in full flight with organic looking parts, spars, sinews, bones and tubes, all mixed up with machinery in a sinister display.

Once inside the derelict the three person team from the *Nostromo* discover an amazing sight. Set inside the control module of an enormous mechanism that looks like a telescope but might equally be a radio transmitter or something else entirely, are the skeletal remains of an alien creature about the size of a young elephant. The empty sockets of its eyes still peer upwards into the telescope type mounting. Its enormous hands still grip a control bar. It has clearly been dead for a long time, perhaps for aeons. Captain Dallas remarks that it looks fossilised and if so then it may have sat there for millions of years.

Enthralled and baffled the three humans, looking diminutive beside it, despite their bulky space suits, stare at the dead creature. Sure enough the huge device, mounted on a raised circular platform, is the source of the twelve second radio beacon. But there is nothing to tell them why the signals were sent although presumably the huge, dead alien sitting half inside its machine was the one that turned the beacon on in the first place. Except that there is a huge hole driven through its chest, a hole as much as a foot across that has burst its thick, massive ribs in a neat circle. It seems the only likely cause of death and it raises ominous thoughts in the minds of Dallas and the others.

But there is nothing for them to do except turn away from the fossilised creature and explore the rest of the hulk. Perhaps the answer to the mystery lies elsewhere. The chamber is empty however, except for the dead alien and its machine, but they find a steep shaft set in the floor and soon Executive Officer Kane descends on



Executive officer Kane, (John Hurt), approaches the alien 'egg'.



Kane looks at the alien 'egg'.



The beginning of a terrifying nightmare.

'KANE WAITS, STARING AT THE EGG HE HAS ACTIVATED... HE LEANS FORWARD FOR A BETTER LOOK...!'

a line into the bowels of the ship. He passes down a tube that has the same ribbed walls and woven textures as the entryways and the upper chamber. Abruptly he emerges into a much larger space, illuminated dimly by a bluish energy field. A mist crawls along the floor of this cavernous space and dotted across it, set in what appears to be mud, are dozens of large, leathery looking eggs. Kane is standing on the upper surface of a long narrow platform that projects out into the chamber amongst the egg things. The platform has a smoothly bevelled upper face and its sides are scooped and ribbed alternately, repeating the semi-organic look of the whole derelict ship.

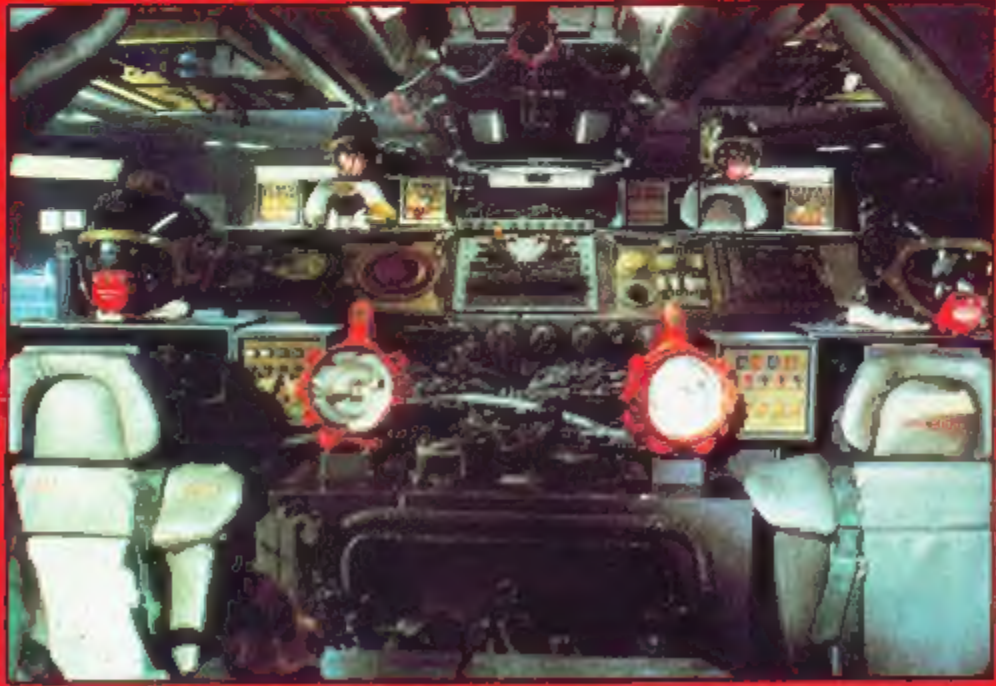
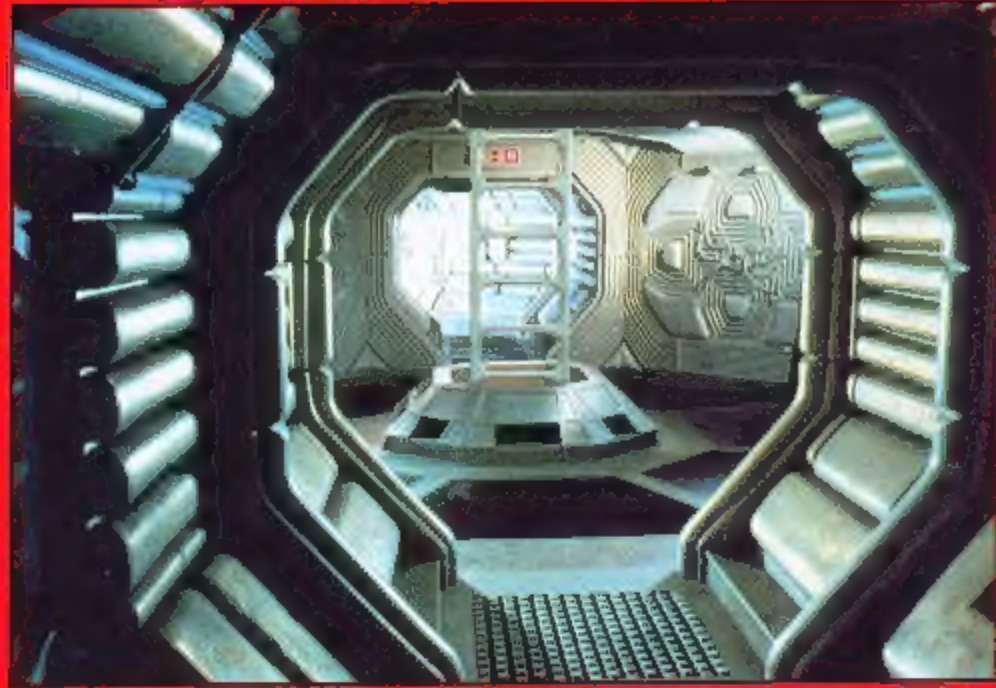
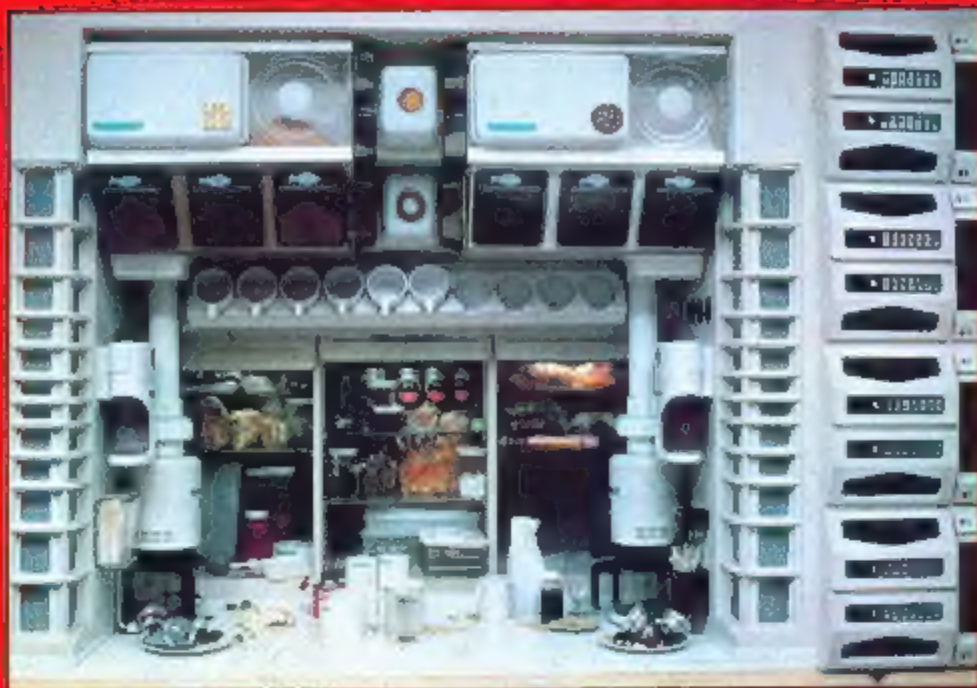
After a moment's reflection Kane shines a light on the eggs and then half climbs, half slips, off the platform to come to rest among them. His torch light falls again on one of the eggs and abruptly awakens that which lies within.

Human greed, compounded by human curiosity have combined to undo the dying efforts of the huge alien pilot. Despite his warning beacon intruders have come and loquacity warned that this was not at all the situation. Kane exposed himself to the peril that inspired the beacon, nothing more can be done.

Kane waits, as the egg he has activated moves swiftly from the dormant state of that of readiness. It becomes translucent, Kane can see a shape within that quivers in desperate excitement at his presence. The top creaks open a little, the trap is set, and he leans forward for a better look...

Alien pivots neatly on this stunning sequence. Before the scenes set in the derelict the pace is slow, the special effects shooting shows us enormous vistas and the overall effect is unsettling and ominous. After the derelict scenes the film begins to quicken in pace, after all by that time Executive Officer Kane has a biological time-bomb ticking away in his chest cavity, if only he or the other human crew members knew it!

THE HUGE SETS FOR THE ALIEN DERELICT SPACE CRAFT WHICH ROSE LIKE EERY PHANTASMS FROM ANOTHER WORLD IN THE MIDDLE OF ENGLAND'S SHEPPERTON STUDIOS.



STARSHIP NOSTROMO

Interior shot from various levels of the factory starship, *Nostromo*. Note the superb attention to detail in these sets, from the functional

design of the food & drink dispenser hatch to the print out on the video display unit.